

INFO LOG-00 AID-00 AMAD-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 DS-00 DHSE-00  
UTED-00 VCI-00 H-00 TEDE-00 INR-00 L-00 MOFM-00  
MOF-00 VCIE-00 NSAE-00 NIMA-00 MCC-00 GIWI-00 DOHS-00  
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2971

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: COMOROS-LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS POSTPONED BY ONE WEEK

11. Summary: The Comoran government and opposition have agreed to hold the scheduled legislative elections a week later than initially planned. "The first round will take place on December 6 instead of November 29 and the second round on December 20 instead of December 13," according to the chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), Saendou Dajant. End Summary

12. The postponement follows a decision last week by the Comoran Constitutional Court invalidating certain articles of the electoral law decreed by President Sambi. The Court rejected over ten articles of that law, but at the same time noted that these articles were not essential to the preparation of the elections, which the Court felt could therefore go ahead as planned. The Court's decision also required the members of the CENI to be re-sworn in before the Constitutional Court rather than before the Court of Appeals (as they had done).

13. Following the Court's decision, a technical commission of jurists from both sides was created, and this commission hammered out the necessary changes in the electoral law that would allow the elections to proceed. President Sambi then issued a new decree containing the new dates and provisions.

14. COMMENT: These developments have two main consequences. First, by disallowing several articles of President Sambi's original electoral law, it allowed the opposition to claim a victory in their on-going dispute with the President concerning the conditions under which the elections would take place. This dispute had grown more prickly in recent weeks, and was even threatening to lead to an opposition boycott of the legislative polls. The court decision (and subsequent arrangements) offered the opposition a way to save face and thereby insure their full participation in the legislative elections. As these elections are of capital importance for the political future of the country, it is to everyone's advantage that they proceed with the full support of all parties involved. Second, on a more practical note, the delay will allow a little more time for donors (who are providing the bulk of the election financing) to get the necessary approvals through their various bureaucracies so that funds will arrive in Moroni in a timely fashion. END COMMENT.

MARQUARDT